this kind to be secure, that it be formed of arches, so as to allow the tide to ebb and flow freely beneath it. We have this moment (Wednesday afternoon) returned from Greenwich, but it being high water, we had no opportunity of further examining the state of the foundation. The huge mass of brickwork and masonry, when viewed from the river, presents a spectacle which it is almost impossible to describe; it is as one immense pile of ruins, the component parts of which appear to have been jumbled together by the force of an earthquake. The constant arrival of steamboats occasions this part of the river to be greatly agitated, and the rushing of the water against the ruins and into the interstices and fissures of the brickwork apparently threatens, ere long, to wash the several tons of rubbish down the stream. At the time of our visit, the workmen had suspended operations, but recrimination has been carried to such a height, between the "Stone Pier Company" and the "Watermen's Company," that at the present moment it is impossible to glean on the spot any information as to the future proceedings, which can at all be relied on. As soon, however, as the work is resumed, we shall daily watch the progress of the operations, and hope to be able to furnish our readers with some interesting information next week. The pier was erected nearly three years since, at a cost of about 40,000*l*. It is estimated that the repair will cost at least half that amount, and nine or ten months will be required to complete the work. We are informed that Messrs. Grissell & Peto are not liable to rebuild the pier, having only entered into an agreement to forfeit 3,000*l*., in the event of the work not holding together for three years, of which two years and eleven months had expired when the disaster which we are now recording occurred. A meeting of the proprietors of the pier has just been held, and it is currently reported that Messrs. Grissell & Peto have already paid the forfeiture of their bond.

NEW PRISON.

At a meeting of the committee, it was determined to prolong the time for sending in the plans, &c. for the New Prison, Leeds, from the 21st of June to the 1st of August next.

Lest there should be any misunderstanding with reference to "the cells," they are to be the same in number as in the government plan, as stated in the instructions to architects, where it is stated that 300 prisoners are to be accommodated; and the architects in furnishing plans will have to provide cells for that number.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF BIRDS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

SIR,—I am induced to send you a specimen of bird-architecture, which I have met with, and hope it will be worthy of a place in THE BUILDER, as a proof that there is great ingenuity in birds as well as man. The name of the bird I wish to describe is the *Parus* (titmouse), called by some persons the blue mope, which does much mischief in gardens and orchards, and every means are tried to come at their nest by the gardener to destroy them; this is the reason that the birds endeavour to secure their nests in trees.

There are thirty-one species of the Parus scattered over the globe, of which eight are common to our own country; it is of a very fertile tribe, laying from ten to twenty eggs at one hatch; they feed on the tender and young buds, seeds, fruit, insects, and a few on flesh; most of them are fond of the brains of other birds, which they get at by cleaving the skull of such as they find dead. They are restless, bold, and cruel to birds less than themselves, and will even attack such as are three times their own size. My attention was drawn, at the commencement of April last, to a pair of these birds that had built their nest in a stump of a tree by the road side. The tree is about four feet ten inches in diameter, and grown over with ivy, the upper part of the tree having been cut away some years ago, and it had a beautiful effect by the road side on which I have to go. The first time my attention was drawn to this tree, was by observing the birds going in and out, as shewn by Fig. 1. The entrance was just so

Fig. 1.

large as to allow them to go in one at once, and about three inches from the top. I should not have supposed there was such a thing, if one of the birds had not come out at the time I was passing. I was therefore induced to examine the tree, which led me to suppose that they had taken up their abode there. I went at different times of the day to watch their movements, concealing myself from them. It is quite clear now, that when I first observed them they were just commencing to work out another separate apartment in the tree, and as the one pecked out, the wood of the new apartment, the other brought it out and dropped it in the road, at a distance from the tree, for fear, I suppose, of their place being found out. But on the 12th of May, it was discovered by a lad in search of birds'nests, one of them coming out just at the time he was passing the tree. He soon commenced breaking into it to get at their nest, which he found contained eight beautiful white eggs, spotted with russet. It so happened that I shortly after had to pass the place, and saw what had taken place, and had the opportunity of seeing the wonderful work which those two birds had done. The first apartment is quite clean, and had been made last year, as there was part of an old nest which the birds had not disturbed. Fig. 2 shews the two apartments, the first

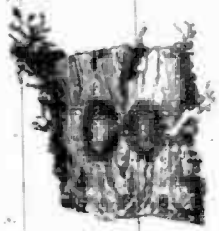

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

the old, the second the new one, made this year; now the entrance to the old one was from the back of the new one, by a small round hole, a little above the nest, there being a partition between the apartments; the inside of them was as shewn by Fig. 3. The nest was made of a little fine moss and cow-hair, the wood was pecked as fine as if it had been done by the hand of man.

I am, Sir, yours,

M. SAUL.

P.S.—I have enclosed you some of the wood, worked out of the tree by the birds, as a proof of the time it must have cost them. You will observe the wood is of the elder tree.

What a theme for the exercise of the philosophic and reflecting mind, and how humiliating, yet in a salutary sense, to the pride of man, is all that knowledge which he gains by his investigation of the working of inferior nature. From the higher class of animals, nearest to himself, down to the veriest reptile, man may learn in every art of which he boasts himself the skilled proficient, and may so learn as to know that his most boasted matters of handicraft are inferior to the instinctive excellences of things which creep beneath, or fly, the fugitive subjects of his dominion. How often have we been tempted to glory in our species, on considering the greatness of the operations of the architects and artificers of ancient India, whose excavations in the mountain rocks at Ellora, Elephanta, &c. have left us such memorials of temple-grandeur, albeit not constructed, but carved of the almost adamantine granite. There, as if working in close affinity of purpose with that Mind which conceived and created the mountain, man had busied himself scooping out, picking away the crystals and the mica of those embosomed masses and wrought a throne and halls, and a sanctuary, as if to shew himself a burrowing as well as a building animal. Turning away from this, we find him overthrowing the rock, and transposing, with the mason's art, its fragmental parts into mimic mountains, and again levelling for himself the forest, and fashioning his structures after nature's groves, its pillars and embowerings. These things have served as matter of pride to us, in our "vain imaginings," and we have been tempted to make idols to ourselves of these Titan artists, to worship them for their consecration of the human genius. Alack, how miserably foolish is all this self-exaltation, after all! this little bird of Mr. Saul's observation, this tiny titmouse, see how he has carved and polished the walls and dome of this sanctuary of his; assaulting with wondrous perseverance this portly trunk of the elder-tree, making the first outhollowing an antechamber to the second, with craftily-contrived passages, as though he had minded to produce a labyrinth, he and his Eleanor, for the security of their converse and the rearing of their young. What more wisely, fitly, skilfully has the vanity of man achieved?—what architecture of the temple, mosque, or cathedral surpasses this? what chiselling and chasing of the carver's art transcends it? "Worthy of a place in THE BUILDER!" What were THE BUILDER worth, if it had not place for beauty and simplicity of this mould? or builders, if they had not hearts to be charmed, and minds to be interested in nature's schooling after this attractive fashion? We thank you, Mr. Saul; we are not mere formalists, stretching the compass, or laying the two-foot rule in every thing; although this admits of both; but nature's pages are the great reading book of the builder, and in every sphere or range of her economy, animal, vegetable, or mineral, organic or inorganic; in earth, air, or sea, we have our exemplars, of which you have now so kindly furnished one.

BUILDING SOCIETIES.

OUR opinion has been asked as to the nature of such societies, and we have taken some time to fortify ourselves in what we should have to say, that we may do so upon fair ground. Theoretically we have much stronger objections to them than practically; but we are not, in the present constitution of society, to look back, nor, perhaps, forward either, to any period of human perfectibility, when the suspicious and objectionable in principle can be banished from our workings.

Men will look to pecuniary profit, and balance the return per cent: for investing their good actions in the common treasury. Fancy-balls and fancy-fairs have been the successful machinery of advocating the cause of public charity. Raffles and lotteries are now relied upon to prop up or raise the condition of our artists. Insurance companies play the benevolent at so much per cent. in behalf of the loser by fire, or the last calamity of man; therefore we see not that it can be avoided that many men are only to possess themselves of a freehold domicile by the speculation of a building society. Nevertheless, the principle of these societies does not appear to us to be a very equitable one; the system of selling shares, in anticipation, to the highest bidder (engaged to pay up the annual calls), for the purpose of enabling the shareholders to build

To learn more about ... and OCR visit ...